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ABSTRACT

This case study of a school-based parent center in a low-income Latino community, based on action research, investigated ways in which low-income parents became involved with their child's school, and identified barriers and supports to the implementation of various parent involvement activities. Data were collected through participant observation, document analysis, parent surveys, and parent and staff interviews. Findings indicated that parent surveys provided an important needs assessment tool that was useful in developing programs. The school's "open-door" policy was identified by staff as the strongest school practice linking the school and families. Both parents and staff identified the principal as the key to establishing parent involvement as a school priority. There was a high level of enthusiasm, support, and energy generated for parent participation during the first year, but father participation in parent center programs was very limited. Collaboration with community agencies provided a high quality parent center, and a great deal of effort was expended in developing collaborative partnerships. A wide range of parent services and programs were offered; parents perceived this diversity as important. English as a Second Language classes were parents' number one priority and were consistently well attended. Over the 4 years of the study, program priorities shifted from families' basic needs toward increased involvement in learning activities at home, decision-making, governance, and advocacy. (Appendices include sample excerpts from the principal log and the parent survey. Contains 67 references.) (KDFB)

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Development of a School-based Parent Center for Low Income New Immigrants

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Summary

The South Bay community, in Los Angeles County, California, evidenced many symptoms that would indicate a breakdown in the connection between the schools and the families in the community. South Bay students ranked among the lowest in the state on standardized achievement tests. Eighty-five percent of the students qualified for Federal compensatory education funding. The high school drop out rate of students from the South Bay community was the highest in Los Angeles County ranging anywhere from 40% to 65%. The mean level of formal education of the adult population in the community was 5.9 years. The lack of previous education and the negative perception of education that many of the adults in the community had, due to past experience, were barriers to family/school cooperation. The problem that this case study examined was the interrelationship between the families in the South Bay community and the schools in the South Bay School District.

The purpose of this research was to make a case study, based on action research, of a school-based parent center in a low-income Latino community. This case study researched viable ways in which low-income parents would become involved with their child's school. In addition, the study collected evidence on barriers and supports to the implementation of various parent involvement activities.

The methodology used in this research was the case study. The case study design was selected to obtain a comprehensive view of an individual parent center program from multiple perspectives from within the program. The design was supported by: (a) participant observation, though the maintenance of a researcher log throughout the length of the study; (b) a comprehensive

archive of parent center documents; (c) parent surveys taken at three points during the study; and (d) parent and staff interview questionnaires. This case study design afforded the researcher the greatest degree of flexibility in observing and obtaining a broad range of data from multiple sources, while at the same time providing as much structure as possible to insure validity and reliability.

Findings

A thorough analysis of the data from the four data sources--principal log, parent center documents, parent surveys and the parent and staff interviews yielded a number of critical findings regarding parent involvement in an immigrant Latino community.

First, it was discovered at the outset, that the data collection process played an essential role in parent center program development. Eleven of the 17 programs, or 65%, indicated on the Benson Parent Center Pyramid (Figure 1), were a direct result of the April 1993 and August 1995 Parent Surveys. Parent center documents indicated that the surveys provided an important needs assessment and background information that was highly useful in developing programs that addresses parent needs.

Second, the reaching out philosophy of the school was cited by Benson staff members as the strongest school practice that linked the school and families. Forty of the 52 staff members who were interviewed (77%) referred to the school's "open door policy" and "open arms attitude" as the key to connecting with parents. Parents responded in kind. During the parent interviews, seven parents specifically mentioned the "open arms " philosophy of the school as being important while nine others cited the open lines of communication.

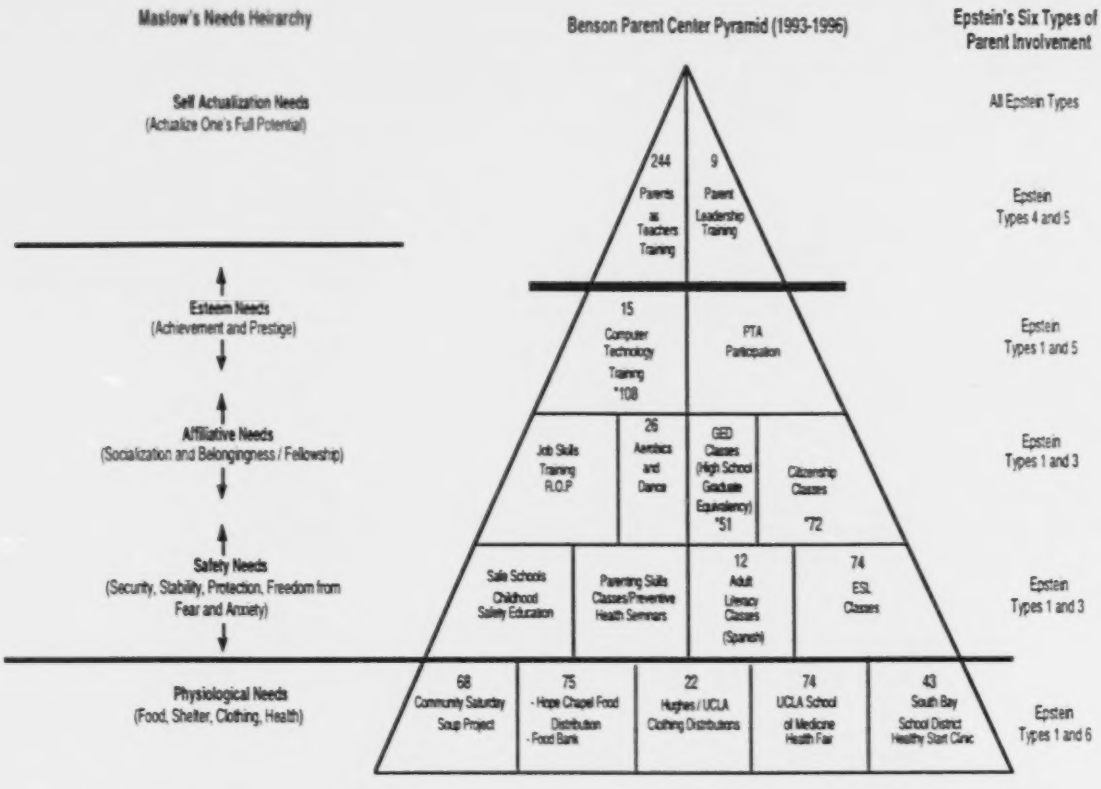
Maslow's Needs Heirarchy
Benson Parent Center Pyramid (1993-1996)
Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement
Self Actualization Needs
(Actualize One's Full Potential)
Esteem Needs
(Achievement and Prestige)
Affiliative Needs
(Socialization and Belongingness / Fellowship)
Safety Needs
(Security, Stability, Protection, Freedom from Fear and Anxiety)
Physiological Needs
(Food, Shelter, Clothing, Health)
244 Parents as Teachers Training
9 Parent Leadership Training
15 Computer Technology Training *108
PTA Participation
Job Skills Training R.O.P
26 Aerobics and Dance
GED Classes (High School Graduate Equivalency) *51
Citizenship Classes *72
Safe Schools Childhood Safety Education
Parenting Skills Classes/Preventive Health Seminars
12 Adult Literacy Classes (Spanish)
74 ESL Classes
68 Community Saturday Soup Project
75 - Hope Chapel Food Distribution - Food Bank
22 Hughes / UCLA Clothing Distributions
74 UCLA School of Medicine Health Fair
43 South Bay School District Healthy Start Clinic
All Epstein Types
Epstein Types 4 and 5
Epstein Types 1 and 5
Epstein Types 1 and 3
Epstein Types 1 and 3
Epstein Types 1 and 6

Figure 1. Three Year Aggregate of Parent Involvement at Benson School Correlated with Maslow's Needs Hierarchy and Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement.

Notes.

1. Benson parent center activities are correlated with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs on the left and Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement on the right.
2. The numbers in each category indicate the frequency that parents completing the surveys participated in each activity.
3. The numbers with a (*) indicate the number of parents who expressed an interest in each activity in the August 1995 Survey.
4. Joyce Epstein provided the correlation information for the Six Types of Parent Involvement at the different levels of the Benson Parent Center Pyramid.

Third, both parent and staff interviews pointed to the principal as the key player in establishing parent involvement as a schoolwide priority. Parent center documents indicated that the focus on parent involvement emerged during the strategic planning process in 1992. The principal established a

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priority of being highly visible and accessible to parents, students and staff. As noted in the parent center documents, the principal was able to maintain strong parent, staff and administrative support through the difficult initial phase of the Hughes collaborative building process. Further, parents supported the principal throughout the Saturday Soup Program, even though it was a cause that they did not necessarily believe in.

Fourth, there was a high level of enthusiasm, support and energy generated for parent participation during the first year, both from the community and the school. Forty-one percent of all of the documents collected during the four years of the study were collected during the initial year. The June 1993

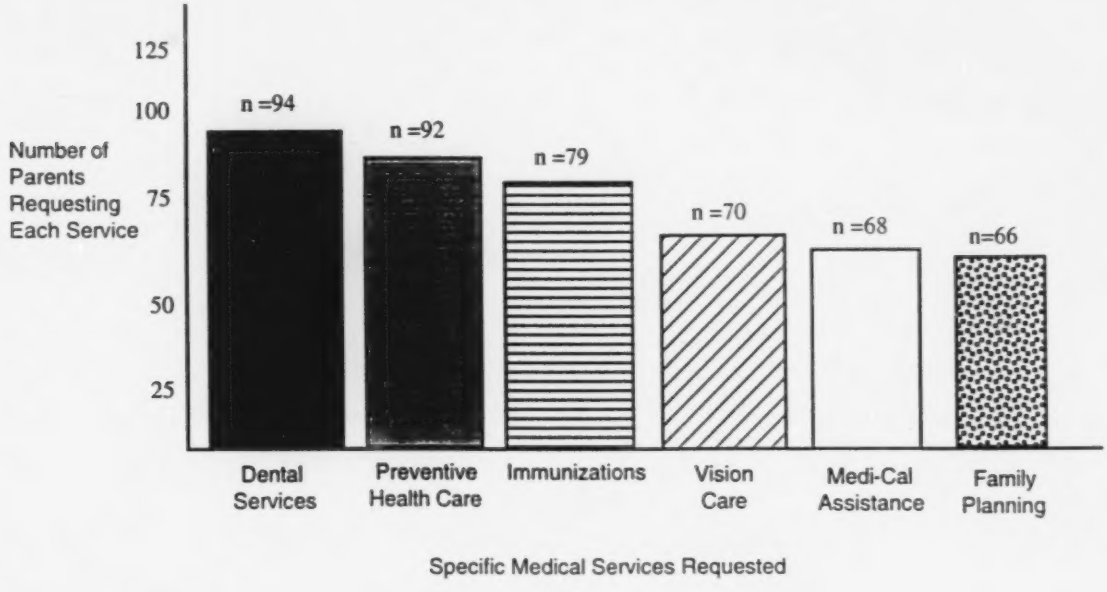

Figure 2. April 1993 Medical Services Needs Assessment.

Health Fair was highly indicative of this enthusiasm and effort. Over forty Benson staff members volunteered to participate in this event and were joined by over 75 volunteers from UCLA, Hughes, Hope Chapel and other community

agencies. Two-hundred-eighty-seven children and adults from the community received health screenings. Seven meetings were conducted by the Parent Involvement Team in preparation for the Health Fair and Parent Center Grand Opening. Literally hundreds of "people hours" went into the planning and execution of the Health Fair to benefit Benson families.

Fifth, father participation in parent center programs was very limited. Sixteen percent of the respondents to the September 1996 Parent Survey were fathers. Only three fathers were interviewed despite the fact that eleven fathers were purposely or randomly selected for interviews. Parent center documents indicated that only four fathers participated in ESL classes.

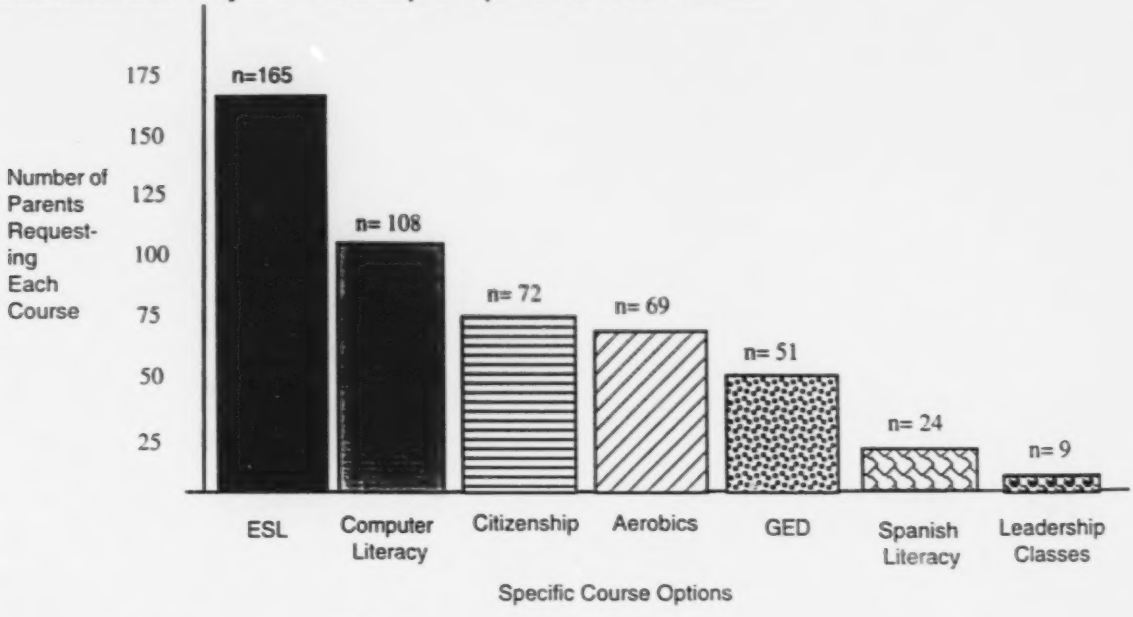

Figure 3. August 1995 Parent Center Course Request Survey.

Sixth, collaboration with community agencies provided a high parent center. Nine of the 17 programs (53%) included in the Benson Parent Center Pyramid, were a direct result of community collaboratives. In addition, nearly half (46%) of the activities indicated on the September 1996 Parent Survey were collaborative activities with community agencies.

Seventh, the parent center document archive indicated that a high percentage of the documents collected during the first year were directly related to the building of collaborative partnerships. Of the 52 documents compiled during the 1992-1993 school year, 37 (71%) were related to partnership building. Thirteen formal partnership meetings were held at Benson School during a five month period in the winter and spring of 1993.

Eighth, the Benson parent center program offered a wide diversity of services and programs that spanned all six of Epstein's parent involvement types. The September 1996 Parent Survey indicated that traditional home-school communication practices accounted for 57% of the parent involvement activities. At the same time, 11% of the activities involved the school assisting the Benson families to meet their basic needs, 14% of the activities involved parents volunteering at school, 8% of the activities had parents involved in learning activities at home, and 10% of the activities were parent involvement in decision-making, governance and advocacy. By the final year of the study, none of the six activity categories had less than 11% of the total number of activities. In addition, excluding traditional home-school communication practices, the activities across all of the category types were balanced (Table 1).

Parents perceived this diversity of program offerings as important. Parent interviews indicated that 54% of the school practices that parents perceived as important in connecting the school and families came from Epstein's types 1, 3, 4 and 5 activities (and not from traditional type 2 practices). Even more significant, Benson staff members perceived that 76% of the important practices that connected the school with families were Epstein types 1, 3, 4 and 5 activities. These non-traditional school practices were responsible for addressing family needs.

Table 1
Frequency of Program Participation According to Epstein's Categories

	Type 1 - Basic Obligations of Families	Type 2 - Basic Obligations of Schools	Type 3- Parent Involvement at School	Type 4- Involvement in Learning Activities at Home	Type 5- Involvement in Decision-Making, Governance and Advocacy	Total Frequency of Activity Participation
Year 2 1993-94	n=118 11%	n=591 56%	n=162 15%	n=88 8%	n=102 10%	n=1,061 100%
Year 3 1994-95	n=125 11%	n=669 61%	n=157 14%	n=74 7%	n=80 7%	n=1,105 100%
Year 4 1995-96	n=139 11%	n=660 54%	n=141 12%	n=138 11%	n=149 12%	n=1,227 100%
Three Year Totals	n=382 11%	n=1,920 57%	n=460 14%	n=300 8%	n=331 10%	n=3,393 100%

Notes.
1. Numbers (n) indicate the frequency that parents participated in individual activities in each category.
2. The percentages (%) indicate the percentage of the total number of activities in the indicated year that parents participated in individual activities in each category.

Ninth, ESL classes were the number one priority of parents on both the April 1993 and August 1995 Parent Surveys. Parent center documents indicated that ESL classes were consistently well attended by parents. Parent center documents, the parent surveys, and the parent interviews further indicated that the parents who attended the ESL classes tended to remain on campus after class. Of the 41 parents who regularly attended ESL classes in the Benson parent center, 59% volunteered in classrooms, 51% got involved in parents as teachers training and 49% participated in PTA and School Site Council meetings. Of the 247 Spanish speaking parents who completed the

September 1996 Parent Survey, 69 participated in ESL classes which equaled 28% of the total.

Tenth, parent center documents, the principal log and the parent surveys indicated a perceptible shift in parent needs and parent center program priorities during the four years of the study. Parent center documents indicated that, initially there was a high demand for services to address the basic needs of Benson families. The health fairs, food distributions, clothing drives, immunizations, and crime prevention education programs were a response to these initial needs. While the parent surveys indicated that the demand for these services continued throughout the duration of the study, participation in Epstein's types 4 and 5 activities, involvement in learning activities at home and involvement in decision-making, governance and advocacy, clearly increased during the final year of the study. Involvement in learning activities at home increased four percentage points over the previous year and involvement in decision-making, governance and advocacy increased five percentage points (Table 1).

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this research, the following conclusions were derived. First, the collection and analysis of data, from multiple sources over time, is a valuable tool in case study research. The ability to examine events over a 51 month period, from a variety of perspectives, using four data collection instruments, offered the researcher the ability to evaluate information in a manner that maximized objectivity while providing invaluable information for program development.. This attention to objectivity addressed many of the perceived weaknesses of the case study design found in the literature (Yin, 1994; Merriam, 1988). The employment of this method of data collection,

recording and analyzing information in the case study, provided structure for the researcher and credibility to the research.

Second, relationships are the foundation of parent involvement in schools. The school culture of reaching out to parents was ultimately the most powerful indicator of whether parent involvement activities would be successful or unsuccessful at Benson School. For outreach to be successful, it needed to be an established goal and priority and the reaching out philosophy had to be embedded in the school culture. This conclusion supported the 1992 research of Davies, Burch and Johnson. The reaching out philosophy was vastly more important than legal mandates. Top down mandates did not necessarily translate into family empowerment at the local level, especially in schools like Benson that had little tradition of parent involvement.

Third, the principal is the gatekeeper of change and is the key figure in establishing the tone and climate of the school. At Benson School this was a recurring theme in both the parent and staff interviews, as seventeen parents and nine staff members specifically mentioned the principal as a critical link between the families and the school. This conclusion validated the research of Goodlad (1984) and Johnson (1993). The principal was the project champion and was able to channel the school's resources and energies to establish parent involvement as a top priority in the school improvement process. The principal was inestimably supported in this process by a second project champion, Marisol Garcia, who provided most of the program coordination. She worked closely with the principal in outreach to parents and worked closely with teachers so that parent center activities and school activities were closely connected.

Fourth, the process of initiating the connection between the school and families requires an extensive commitment of the principal's and school staff's

time and energy. Parent center documents at Benson indicated that this process took an entire year. However, every new program increased the connection and contact between families and the school. Nothing breeded success like success. This increased contact and interaction between the parents and staff, was the most critical factor in supporting and changing staff member's beliefs about working with parents. Successful connection between the school and families led to even more connection. This finding was strongly supported in the literature. The quality of the home-school relationship provided the impetus for parents to get involved. The level of parent involvement was directly related to specific practices that the school and teachers used in reaching out to parents. As a direct by-product of the increased connection between the families and the school, teacher expectations for parents rose, as did their appreciation of the parents as partners.

Fifth, fathers remained largely outside of the family-school connection at Benson School.. Father participation was no higher than 19% of the total parent participation in any of the Epstein activity categories included in the September 1996 Parent Survey. The absence of father participation in the Benson School community typified the lack of father participation in schools throughout the country as indicated in the research.

Sixth, collaboration building with the community is essential to the reaching out effort. A successful parent center program cannot address community needs in isolation. The Benson parent center could not have served the Benson community without the Epstein type 6 collaborative partnerships. The collaborative partnerships with Hughes, UCLA, Hope Chapel, the Centinela Valley Adult School, the Joseph Plan Foundation and the Lennox Sheriff/Los Angeles Police Department created a synergy that provided a rock

solid foundation for the Benson Parent Center Pyramid (Figure 1). As successful collaborative programs were initiated, they gained momentum and created a "snowball" effect collecting and adding more programs along the way. Certain activities tended to be catalysts that triggered other activities. Two specific examples of this were the health fairs (UCLA) and the crime prevention presentations (LAPD). The health fairs generated the aerobics class, parent classes in preventive health and nutritious cooking and the Healthy Start Community Center. The crime prevention presentations resulted in, a Safe Schools grant, the finger printing of Benson students, the Violence in the Community Forum and the drive for community-based policing.

Seventh, interagency collaboration development requires an enormous commitment of time and energy. The Benson parent center documents indicated that the Hughes/South Bay/UCLA partnership required five months of weekly meetings to become firmly established. The collaborative partnerships tended to be politically fragile and, as with any interpersonal relationship, required much work and effort to maintain. The trust building relationship did not develop overnight. The trust tended to evolve over time with constant nurturing. However, the results of the collaborative partnerships were vastly increased services for the students and families in the Benson community. These services enabled the Benson parent center program to address a critical element in the literature. In order to maximize parent/community involvement, the literature indicated that the best strategy was to offer many options for parents and families to pick and choose (Dolan & Haxby, 1995). Collaborative partnerships vastly enhanced the options and opportunities for parent involvement in parent center programs.

Eighth, comprehensive parent programs, with a wide selection of opportunities, are essential to meeting family needs and ensuring productive

parent involvement in schools. Traditional home-school communication (Epstein type 2) is effective, but not nearly adequate if parents are going to play a strong role in the education of their children. Traditional communication between the school and Benson families accounted for 57% of the parent involvement activities that connected parents with the school. However, it was the other 43% of the overlap activities, that had the greatest impact on the Benson community. Effective practices of overlap and partnership were responsive to the common and different needs of families so that all families could be connected to the school at some level. It was important to tailor the services offered by the parent center program to the population requiring the services. This meant developing a comprehensive program with a wide selection of opportunities. Parents tended to get involved initially, according to their level of family need. While the school never lost sight of the ultimate objective of parent center programs--to motivate parents to continue their own learning so that they could support the academic endeavors of their children, the lower level physiological and safety needs of the families needed to be met, if the individuals, adults and children, were going to be free and unencumbered to perform up to their full potential. Comprehensive programs were needed to assist parents in moving up the needs hierarchy and to counteract the negative forces in the community that were preventing parents from becoming more involved at school.

Ninth, the ESL (English as a Second Language) class, was a "gateway" activity to parent involvement in other types of activities. Similar to the health fairs and crime prevention presentations, ESL was a catalyst for more extensive parent involvement at the school. The school culture was a highly enabling factor. Parents felt supported and comfortable in spending time at school and the social context of the school met their affiliative needs. As mentioned earlier,

of the 41 parents who regularly attended ESL classes in the parent center, 59% remained on campus to volunteer in classrooms, 51% got involved in parents as teachers training and 49% were actively involved in PTA and School Site Council.

More importantly, ESL was a gateway for Benson families to gain access to the broader English speaking community. Language was the key to providing political, economic, and social access to the extended community. Language was also the key ingredient in motivating adults to continue their participation in formal adult learning. The experience of Benson parents with the ESL program would substantiate the research of Cell and Mezirow.

Tenth, in this Latino community, parent center programs reflected a definite pattern of evolution from addressing basic family needs to addressing higher order family needs. The priorities for initial parent center programs, during the first two years of the study, focused on assisting families in meeting their basic needs. Initial parent center programs were a direct response to the April 1993 Parent Survey and the June 1993 Health Fair. The vast majority of the early parent center activities were focused on addressing the physiological and safety needs of Benson families at the bottom levels of Maslow's needs hierarchy. The collaborative partnerships--UCLA School of Medicine, Hope Chapel, Centinela Valley Adult School, were especially critical in addressing the lower order needs. ESL, literacy classes, parenting education and citizenship classes were all in high demand, reflecting the security (safety) and stability needs of Benson parents.

However, the development of parent center programs, which focused on meeting the basic obligations of families, seemed to encourage parents to become involved in other Epstein types of activities. Of 62 parents surveyed in September 1996, who participated in at least three different kinds of type 1

activities (Basic Obligations of Families), all 62 participated in type 2 activities, 52 participated in volunteer activities at school (type 3), 43 were involved in learning activities at home (type 4) and 55 were involved in decision-making, governance and advocacy activities (type 5).

It would appear that, as the basic family needs were more adequately addressed, the parents were better able and willing to get involved in activities that addressed higher levels of need according to Maslow's hierarchy. Parent center course offerings, volunteering at school, and becoming more involved in school governance and the education of their children reinforced the affiliative and self-esteem needs of Benson parents.

As a substantial and comprehensive number of programs that addressed basic family needs were institutionalized in the Benson parent center, the parent center program was able to shift priorities and evolve, during the final two years of the study, to focus more specifically on developing parent leadership capacity and the parents as teachers at the upper levels of Maslow's hierarchy (Figure 1).

It was important to note that, as this evolution in parent center program priorities was unfolding, there was a critical need to maintain the existing basic needs services to continue to assist Benson families in their development and address the needs of new families entering the school. The evolution of parent center programs was predicated on the maintenance of services that would continue to address basic family needs.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are made. It is recommended that parent center programs use a broad variety of data collection instruments. Specifically, parent center programs should carefully consider the use of surveys and other feed back mechanisms, at strategic points

during program development and implementation, to provide an ongoing flow of information to guide practice. The parent surveys, at an early point in the Benson study and again, beyond the mid- point of the study, offered critical pre-assessment information for program development and important formative feedback to insure that parent center programs remained sensitive to family needs.

Second, it is recommended that school and parent center personnel establish a process to carefully listen to parents and solicit their input before implementing any new programs. Relationship building and clear honest communication, based on trust, are the roots of successful parent center programs. Schools that develop parent center programs, especially in communities with no strong tradition of parent involvement and interagency collaboration, should exercise extreme patience in allowing relationships and parent leadership capacity time to incubate. Both collaboration building and leadership development are heavily dependent on human interaction and trust. Given adequate time, a solid foundation can be developed which will yield high dividends in subsequent years. In laying this foundation, schools should develop a clear, comprehensive and supportive policy system regarding parent involvement so that all constituencies--teachers, parents and community--are clear with regard to the goals and priorities of the parent center program and each of their unique roles in the success of the program.

Third, it is recommended that school principals carefully consider and weigh the positive outcomes of parent involvement programs in improving the instructional program for all students. Principals, as the gatekeepers of change, exercise an incalculable influence on the school culture. The principal is the heartbeat in establishing the tone and culture of a school that reaches out to families and the community. The principal provides the leadership and the

access to school resources in focusing attention on parent involvement. Principals cannot underestimate their crucial role in linking the school and families and this role should be taken very seriously.

Fourth, it is recommended that schools that are considering the development of a comprehensive parent center program, be fully aware of the significant investment of time and energy involved in initiating effective programs. Reaching out to parents and the community is both time and energy intensive and requires a great deal of commitment and resolve. Connecting with families and the community needs to be a top priority for the school administration and staff, if the connections are going to be productive.

Fifth, it is recommended that fathers take a much more active role in the education of their children. The fact that only 14% of the respondents on the extensive September 1996 Parent Survey were fathers is significant and indicative of the minimal role that fathers play in the formal education of their children, especially in Latino communities. Fathers need to be encouraged to play a greater role in education both at school and at home. Schools need to be creative in providing fathers with specific program options to get involved. The reaching out effort should specifically target fathers.

Sixth, it is recommended that parent center programs build collaboration, beyond the school, to assist the school in addressing family needs. Collaborative partnerships play a critical role in aiding the schools to meet the basic needs of families. Interagency collaboration can vastly increase the number and scope of services that the school can provide for students and their families so that the school can focus more energy on working with parents to address the academic needs of students.

Seventh, it is recommended that schools, particularly in low-income communities, develop comprehensive parent center programs that address a

wide range of family needs. Traditional home-school communication is inadequate in addressing family needs. In order for home-school communication to be truly effective in addressing the academic needs of children, basic family needs must be removed as a barrier. Comprehensive parent center programs that address basic family needs can provide an effective solution. Further, it is recommended that these comprehensive basic need programs be ongoing to support the continuous progress of parents and families and to provide immediate services to new families with needs as they enter school.

Eighth, in developing comprehensive programs, it is recommended that schools carefully analyze the needs of the community. Parents and families tend to get involved in the school according to their level and degree of need. A careful analysis of these needs can provide essential information in identifying "gateway" activities that can increase and strengthen the connection between families and the schools.

Finally, it is recommended that parent centers and parent involvement strategies place a greater emphasis on training parents to be more actively involved in their children's education. Even after the four years of the Benson parent center program, only 11% of the parent involvement activities were specifically focused on training the parents to play a greater role in the education of their children. The literature strongly indicates that even in low-income, immigrant communities like the Benson School community, parents are able and willing to play a more significant role in their children's education. This is especially true when steps have been taken to address the basic family needs.

Future Research

Future research should focus on broadening the base of literature regarding the role of parent centers in developing and supporting school-family partnerships. A strong base of research exists to support the critical role that families can play in improving student academic achievement. However, this existing research does not make a strong link between increased student achievement and the specific policies, programs and practices that schools employ to raise achievement. As the critical linkage place between the home and schools, parents centers provide a context for the examination of specific policies, programs and practices that improve student achievement.

This current research focused on the home-school relationship in a single, immigrant, Latino community. As the Latino population continues to rise in the United States, further research will be needed to validate and test this case study and to continue to examine the most effective policies, programs and practices in working with Latino families. A single case study is only a snapshot in time. Multiple studies with several minority populations are needed to establish a viable pool of information to form government policy and practice.

This research suggests a model which relates Maslow's and Epstein's theoretical models to the development and evolution of effective parent center programs that address family needs. Future research to validate and test the Benson Pyramid Model is recommended in other Latino communities and other minority populations, particularly in low income and immigrant communities.

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Appendix A

Included in Appendix A is a list of seven different types of documents that are archived in the Parent Center Documents. The archive includes 130 separate documents collected during the four-year period from September 1992 to June 1996. The principal's daily planner was an additional important component of the Parent Center Documents.

Hughes/South Bay/UCLA Partnership Documents

Collaborative Partnership Agreement
Parent Involvement Team Meeting Agendas
Parent Involvement Team Meeting Minutes
Parent Involvement Team Rosters
Parent Involvement Team Year End Report/Evaluations
Partnership Newsletters

Benson Parent Center Documents

Parent Center Grand Opening Documents
    -Parent Letter
    -Program Agenda
Parent Surveys for Parent Center Program Development
Teacher Surveys for Parent Center Program Development
Drawings/Plans for a New Parent Center Facility
Parent Center Program Descriptions
Program Notices to Parents
Volunteer Job Descriptions
Parent Center Program Pyramid
Parent Lists for Parent Center Classes
Parent Center Newsletters to Parents
Parent Center Newsletters to the Benson Staff
Clothing Drive Notices
Paernt Appreciation Day Notices

Curriculum Documents

Speakers Bureau Calendar of Topics
Parent Crime Prevention Curriculum
Parent-Teacher Partnership Curriculum
Community Violence Prevention Forum
Family Reading Curriculum Summary

Fundraising Documents

Grant Proposals
Fundraising Letters
Fundraising Plan for the Construction of a New Parent Center
    -Benson Renaissance Project Brochure
    -Renaissance Project Funding Request Letters
Computer Request Letter

Health Fair Documents

Health Fair Planning Documents
Family Health Screening Protocols
    -Child Medical Forms
    -Adult Medical Forms
Health Fair Evaluations
Health Fair Follow-up Letters to Parents
Healthy Start Community Center Documents

Benson PTA Documents

Monthly PTA Meeting Agendas
PTA Parent Letters
PTA Budgets

Principal Documents

Principal's Personal Notes From Meetings
Memorandums from the Principal to School Staff
Principal Speeches
Newspaper Articles

Appendix B

Sample Excerpts From the Principal Log

Appendix B includes three entries from the principal log which typify the documentation collected from this data source. The principal's daily planner was an additional important component of the principal log.

July 6,1995

There appears to be significant interest on the part of Hughes Space and Communications Company to talk to us about funding for our parent center. Marta Sanchez has arranged a meeting with Andy Romero and Dan Owens for the week of July 10.

I am interested in setting up a Fathers Night for the fall with speakers on the significance of dads in the support of their childrens' education. We could include myself and six or seven other male staff members and do three-minute vignettes on our own experiences and include a discussion about successful parent practices modeled after Pride Card Night at South Bay Middle School.

The moms have voted to continue the Soup Project two Saturdays per month in the fall. Also, we made $1600 on the McDonalds Peel-Off Fundraiser. Dr. Hiatt completed a preliminary proposal for a Head Start Conference in Washington DC in June of 1996. It looks good and gives me some direction and incentive to keep researching.

July 23, 1995

Much of the research literature that I have been reading from The Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning and other sources focuses on the national, state and local policies and practices that help or hinder parent involvement. States are specifically identified as possible torch carriers for policy change. I'm not so sure that parent involverment can be

legislated. It seems like what is more important, is an attitude or a passion for parent involvement. If this is lacking, no amount of legislation is going to genuinely put it in place.

I spoke with Marisol Garcia on the telephone on July 17. We were able to at least discuss some issues but she's not seeing eye-to-eye with me on the same items she brought up before--student council, the parent center facility and the Saturday Soup Program. Masrisol has been an absolute God-Send to us but unfortunately it looks like our relationship is beyond repair. Its a sad day for Benson School and for Tom Johnstone.

September 23,1995

The Health Fair on September 9 was once again extremely successful and for the first time we have been able to turn the follow-up directly over to Healthy Start so we can ensure that we are not just identifying problems, but we are actually able to follow up and address them. As an off-shoot to the health fair and Healthy Start, Diego Palmas, from Healthy Start has done a nutrition presentation for a Benson PTA meeting and his wife will be doing a series of nutritious cooking classes in the parent center. In addition, two of my kindergarten teachers will be starting a parent aerobics class that will meet at Benson and also use the Fitness Center at South Bay Middle School.

The parent orientation meetings went very well, but its the same age-old conclusion, there is much more interest among both parents and teachers at the Preschool- First Grade Level. I think its an efficacy issue. The parents can get involved and be successful if we expect them to and if we make it fun and meaningful for them. The kindergarten meeting was fabulous because all four teachers are extremely dedicated to parent involvement in the education of their children. They have scheduled three follow-up meetings with parents on October 4, 11, and 18 to cover language arts, math and general parenting

strategies regarding education at home. At the grades 1-5 level, in many cases, teachers do the orientations with parents because they have to, not because they really believe in it. I think I have teachers at every grade level that believe in involving the parents, but I know its not universal.

Appendix C - Parent Survey

Name_____ Child's Name(s)_____

Relationship to child: (Circle One) _____

Mother Father Guardian Other

Mark an X on those activities that you participated in below.

Record the number of times that you participated in each activity in the year columns below.

Participation	Activity	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
____	Christmas Baskets	____	____	____
____	Hope Chapel Food Distribution (3 times a year)	____	____	____
____	Hughes Clothing Distributions (twice)	____		
____	Saturday Community Soup Meal (bi-monthly)		____	____
____	Health Fairs (Jun. 1993, Sept. 1995)	____		____
____	Diabetes Support Group			____
____	Sheets Dental Clinic (open daily)			____
____	Healthy Start Clinic (open daily)		____	____
____	Westside Regional Information Fair			____
____	ESL Classes (daily)	____	____	____
____	Aerobics Classes (twice weekly)	____	____	____
____	Spanish Literacy Class (daily)	____	____	____
____	Technology Classes (Fall 1996)			____
____	Parent Conference Days (Each year in October)	____	____	____
____	Halloween Carnival	____	____	____
____	Evening Student Performances	____	____	____

Participation	Activity	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
____	Community BBQ (Each year in September)	____	____	____
____	Parent Orientation Meetings (Each year in September)	____	____	____
____	Principal's Honor Roll Breakfast (3 times per year)	____	____	____
___	Volunteer in your child's Classroom	____	____	____
____	Sewing for Student Performances	____	____	____
____	Participate in 5 de Mayo Parade	____	____	____
____	Assist with Teacher Appreciation Day	____	____	____
____	Help with Campus Supervision	____	____	____
____	Los Padres Parent Education Classes (8 sessions)	____	____	____
____	Kindergarten parent meetings	____	____	____
____	Preschool Parent Training	____	____	____
____	CSUDH Program Discovery (1996)			____
____	Benson Library Card for Parents			____
____	Family Math (1996)			____
____	Family Reading (1996)			____
____	School Site Council (5 meetings)	____	____	____
____	Advocacy for School Uniforms (1994)	____		
____	Advocacy for fundraising	____	____	____
____	Pepperdine Violence in the Community Forum (March 1996)			____
____	Parent Leadership Class (Fall 1996)			____
____	Benson School Community Beach Clean-up (Venice Beach) (Summer 1996)			____

Appendix D

Parent Interview Protocol

Name _____

Years at Benson School _____

Number of Children Attending Benson School _____

Relationship to Child: (Circle One)

Mother Father guardian other

Interview Questions

1. What school practices and activities, if any, that were indicated on the survey, were instrumental in increasing your involvement at Benson School?

_____

_____

_____

Are there activities on the list that you would like to be involved in but are not? yes/no (circle) If yes, Why aren't you involved? (What obstacles prevent you from getting involved at Benson School?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

What are some things that Benson should be doing for parents, that they are not doing?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What factors in the school culture or school environment invite or inhibit parents to become involved at school?

3. What school or teacher practices have changed your beliefs about working with teachers and staff?

What are your feelings about the teachers that your child has had?

What are your feelings about office staff including the principal and counselor?

4. Why did you get involved in the activities that you checked? (Were any of the parent center programs indicated on the survey, useful to you or your family?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. How has your relationship with your child's teacher and other school staff affected your child's academic learning?

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Any final thoughts or comments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix E

Benson School Staff Interview Protocol
Teacher/Principal/Office Staff

Name _____

Years at Benson School _____

Current Grade Level Assignment _____

Do you have a child at Benson? Yes No

Check Appropriate Box(es)

____ teacher
____ principal
____ counselor
____ clerical staff
____ custodian
____ health specialist
____ librarian
____ teacher assistant
____ parent

Interview Questions

1. What school practices and activities for parents at Benson School do you feel increase parent involvement in the school?

_____

_____

_____

2. What factors in the school culture and school environment invite parents to become involved at school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What factors in the school culture and school environment inhibit parents to become involved at school?

_____

_____

_____

What are your overall feelings about Benson parents and their involvement at school and in their child's education?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What practices at Benson School, if any, have increased the connection that you have with parents?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What do you specifically do to reach out to parents?

_____ Newsletters

_____ Notes Home

_____ Phone Calls

_____ In Person Conferences

_____ Requests for Volunteer Help

_____ Parent Training to Assist Child at Home

_____ Home Visits

_____ Other (Explain) _____

_____

4. What school or teacher practices of partnership, if any, have changed your beliefs about working more closely with parents?

_____

_____

What specific practices do you use/have you used to get parents involved in your classroom?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What additional things can you /the school do to reach out to parents?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. How has your relationship with your students' parents and/or family affected the academic learning of your students?

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Any final thoughts or comments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation!